

## ПЕРЕКЛАДОЗНАВСТВО

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**Boiko Ya. V.**

Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design

### ETHICS & ETIQUETTE OF DIPLOMATIC DISCOURSE AS A PROBLEM OF TRANSLATION STUDIES

*This article explores the essential concepts of ethics (moral principles governing right and wrong) and etiquette (socially acceptable behaviour and formal communication) in diplomatic discourse, emphasizing their distinct yet interrelated roles in guiding human interactions. The article highlights how these concepts overlap in diplomacy, where maintaining ethical standards such as honesty and neutrality are crucial, while etiquette dictates the appropriate tone, formality, and cultural sensitivity necessary for successful diplomatic communication. The article further delves into the specifics of diplomatic language, emphasizing characteristics such as formality, neutrality, indirect speech, and the use of honorifics to maintain decorum and promote peaceful relations. A key focus of the article is the role of translation in diplomatic discourse, particularly when transferring between languages with distinct cultural and linguistic norms. The author suggests a specialized methodology that incorporates both ethical considerations and the specific etiquette of diplomatic discourse. This methodology includes reproductive tactics aimed at preserving neutrality, accuracy, and clarity in translation while maintaining respect for cultural and ethical norms and adaptive tactics. The article also outlines the challenges translators face when rendering etiquette-related expressions from one language to another, noting that the Ukrainian language, for instance, often requires more elaborate or emphatic expressions compared to English. It emphasizes the importance of balancing precision and cultural sensitivity to avoid misinterpretations and ensure the translation is consistent with diplomatic standards. The article advocates for a translation methodology that adapts to the context and ensures ethical and culturally appropriate communication, stressing that the subtlety of diplomatic language necessitates careful consideration to preserve its intended meaning and tone.*

**Key words:** *ethic concept, etiquette language formulas, diplomatic language, reproductive and adaptive tactics in the reproduction of diplomatic discourse.*

**Statement of the problem.** Diplomatic discourse operates within a highly sensitive and formal domain, where ethics and etiquette are integral to effective communication. Translators of diplomatic texts face a dual challenge: maintaining the ethical integrity of the source message while adhering to the rules of etiquette that define the tone and formality of diplomatic communication. These dual dimensions present unique problems for translation studies, requiring a balance between moral obligations and culturally appropriate expressions.

Translating diplomatic texts involves critical ethical considerations, including fidelity to the source message, neutrality, and respect for cultural and political sensitivities. Any deviation – intentional or unintentional – can lead to misrepresentation, bias, or

even diplomatic conflicts. Furthermore, the translator must navigate political pressures, conflicting interests, and the risk of manipulation, all while ensuring transparency and confidentiality.

Diplomatic discourse is steeped in formal conventions, politeness strategies, and culturally specific norms. Missteps in etiquette – such as an inappropriate tone, misuse of honorifics, or failure to recognize cultural nuances – can undermine the intended message, offend stakeholders, or damage relationships. Translators must not only convey the meaning precisely but also preserve the delicate subtleties of diplomatic protocol in their target language.

Despite its importance, the intersection of ethics and etiquette in translating diplomatic discourse

remains underexplored in translation studies. Existing frameworks often focus on technical accuracy or cultural adaptation but fail to consider how translators can simultaneously uphold ethical principles and conform to the formalities of diplomatic etiquette. This gap highlights the need for a more integrated approach that addresses both dimensions.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The ethics of reproducing diplomatic discourse has gained significant attention in academic research because of its impact on international relations and cross-cultural communication. Although the intersection of ethics, etiquette, diplomacy, and translation studies remains an emerging field, recent studies by scholars such as V. Babiuk, O. Halyns'ka, N. Kaschyshyn, T. Osyntseva, N. Pavlovs'ka, A. Sitko, and Yu. Sudus have identified key areas of concern and development.

V. Babiuk explores the role of translators as cultural mediators and highlights the ethical challenges that arise from different political ideologies and cultural norms. These studies concentrate on the risk of manipulation or distortion of the source text due to political pressure or unconscious bias [1, p. 30]. N. Kaschyshyn focuses on the impact of language choice on diplomatic negotiations and how mistranslation can increase tensions. Publications in this field often emphasize the need for ethical guidelines that ensure neutrality and accuracy while considering the complexities of cross-cultural interpretation [5, p. 95]. Yu. Sudus investigates how cultural frameworks shape the interpretation of meaning in diplomatic texts and presents key approaches to understanding the moral and ethical responsibilities of translators [10, p. 125]. His work highlights the significance of transparency, accountability, and professional integrity in the practice of translation.

Case studies examining historical diplomatic incidents, such as mistranslations during international negotiations, offer valuable insights into the ethical challenges of translating diplomatic discourse. For instance, research on the translation of United Nations resolutions or bilateral agreements often reveals

the significant consequences of mistranslation, underscoring the translator's vital role in ensuring clarity and accuracy. Nevertheless, the issue of etiquette translation methodology, particularly the ethics of language and polite forms of communication, remains a key concern for linguists.

**Task statement** consists in analysing etiquette formulas and clichés in diplomatic discourse from an ethical perspective within translation studies, focusing on the challenges translators face and exploring how ethical principles and etiquette conventions influence translation decisions while proposing strategies for maintaining balance in this complex field.

**Outline of the main material of the study.** *Ethics* and *etiquette* are fundamental to human interaction, especially in formal and sensitive contexts such as diplomacy. Ethics and etiquette are closely related but distinct concepts, each playing a critical role in guiding behaviour and interactions (Table 1). While *ethics* deals with the moral principles that govern right and wrong, ensuring fairness, honesty, and integrity, *etiquette* refers to the codes of polite behaviour that guide socially acceptable actions and communication [3].

While ethics and etiquette are distinct, they overlap, as diplomatic discourse combines ethics (ensuring honesty and neutrality) with etiquette (using polite language and formal greetings). Both are crucial in diplomatic discourse where the stakes are high and missteps can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts or diplomatic crises. Ethics in diplomacy involves ensuring that communication is truthful, unbiased, and respectful of all parties' interests, while etiquette dictates the appropriate tone, formality and cultural sensitivity necessary for maintaining diplomatic decorum. In translation studies, the challenge lies in navigating the delicate balance between adhering to ethical principles and respecting the etiquette conventions of different cultures and languages. This dual responsibility is central to achieving effective, respectful, and morally sound translations of diplomatic texts.

**Diplomatic discourse** encompasses the language and communication practices used by representatives of states, international organizations, or political

Table 1

Key differences between ethics and etiquette

Aspect	Ethics	Etiquette
Focus	Moral principles and right vs. wrong	Social norms and appropriate behaviour
Scope	Universal and philosophical	Culturally or contextually specific
Purpose	Ensures justice and fairness	Promotes harmony and respect
Violations	May have serious moral or legal consequences	Leads to social awkwardness or offense
Flexibility	Relatively universal in nature	Highly variable across cultures

entities during formal negotiations, agreements or exchanges. It is marked by a structured, strategic, and formal use of language aimed at promoting cooperation, resolving conflicts and influencing outcomes on the international stage, with the primary goal of maintaining or improving relations between states through peaceful communication. [4, p. 314].

Diplomatic language is a special form of communication used in international relations, where accuracy, formality and respect for cultural and political peculiarities are paramount. It serves to maintain warm relations between states and ensures the smooth functioning of diplomatic negotiations, agreements, and discussions. The main characteristics of diplomatic language are as follows [4; 7; 9]:

1. High degree of formality, while using precise and polite expressions to maintain professionalism and respect, e.g.: *We would like to extend our sincere gratitude for your continued support in this matter* [13].

2. Honorifics, indirect speech, and hedging to soften requests, express disagreements tactfully, and build rapport, e.g.: *It might be beneficial to explore alternative solutions to this issue* [13].

3. A neutral tone is used to avoid strong emotions or biases, promoting impartiality and constructive dialogue, e.g.: *The proposed measures require further discussion to ensure mutual agreement* [13].

4. Modal verbs such as *could*, *might*, *would*, and *should* are commonly used to suggest possibilities or obligations without imposing them outright, e.g.: *We might consider this proposal as a potential starting point for negotiation* [13].

5. Diplomatic statements often take the form of suggestions or observations rather than commands or criticisms, e.g.: *There appears to be room for improvement in this area* [13].

6. Balance between precision (to avoid misunderstandings in agreements) and ambiguity (to allow flexibility or defer decisions), e.g.: *The parties will work together in good faith to achieve a mutually acceptable solution* [13].

7. Repetition of key terms ensures clarity and emphasis, especially in formal agreements or speeches, e.g.: *We are committed to peace. Peace is our ultimate goal, and peace must be sustained* [13].

8. Euphemisms, indirect phrasing, and softening strategies to address sensitive issues without causing offense or discomfort to maintain politeness and avoid direct confrontation, e.g.: *regrettable incidents* instead of *conflicts* or *violations*. *While we understand your position, we would like to propose...* [13].

9. Culturally appropriate metaphors, idioms, and references to respect cultural differences,

e.g.: avoiding phrases that might carry negative connotations in a specific culture [13].

10. Specialized vocabulary, particularly in legal, economic, or military contexts, ensures clarity and precision, helping all parties understand the exact terms and conditions and avoid ambiguity, e.g.: *In accordance with Article 5 of the bilateral agreement...* [13].

11. International diplomatic terminology and terminology of international law, mainly of Latin and French origin, since the language of diplomacy in the Middle Ages was Latin, and later French, e.g.: *consul, convention, attache, demarche, communiqué*.

12. The passive voice is commonly used to depersonalize statements and focus on the action or issue rather than the individuals involved, e.g.: *Mistakes were made* instead of *We made mistakes*.

13. Symbolic expressions, such as proper titles, formal addresses, and adherence to correspondence conventions, are used to convey goodwill, respect, and shared values, e.g.: *Your Excellency, it is an honor to convey our nation's greetings to the esteemed people of your country. His Excellency, the Ambassador of [Country], has made significant contributions...* [13].

14. Abstract and dense syntactic structures to convey complex ideas succinctly while allowing room for interpretation, e.g.: *The parties shall endeavor to undertake measures conducive to the enhancement of bilateral cooperation* [13].

15. The reference to prior agreements, international laws, or historical events to establish context and legitimacy, e.g.: *As outlined in the Charter of the United Nations, we are committed to maintaining international peace and security*.

In different languages of the world, special (lexical, morphological, syntactic, prosodic) means of expressing politeness have been developed, special etiquette language formulas that form a whole system in each specific language – language etiquette. These are actually etiquette language formulas, that is, such fixed language formulas that are used during contact between communicants. Among them, the following are distinguished [6; 11]:

1) when establishing contact between speakers – formulas of address and greeting, e.g.: *To all the Honorary Consuls...* [13];

2) when maintaining contact – formulas of apology, request, gratitude, etc., e.g.: *... to express our sincere gratitude for...* [13];

3) when terminating contact – farewell formulas, wishes, etc., e.g.: *Thank you for your attention* [13].

The structure of the language etiquette of diplomatic speech is determined by the following

basic elements of communicative situations: greetings (*It is with great pleasure that I welcome you*), farewell, (*Best regards*), apology (*Accept our apologies for the delay*), appeal (*Please send us your new catalogue*), gratitude (*We thank you for the letter*), compliment (*I wish you success in the fulfilment of your noble and important mission*), acquaintance (*I am very happy to have this early occasion to meet with such a distinguished audience*), address (*Dear Mr. Roger Gill*), consensus and confirmation (*That's great... That is a very good idea*), compassion (*We are sorry that we have been unable...*), offer and advice (*We would like to help you*). Language etiquette itself includes, in addition to the actual etiquette formulas, also socio-linguistic symbols of the etiquette level: etiquette forms of denial (disagreement) and affirmation (agreement), forms of questions used in certain socio-cultural groups [9, p. 298].

Each of the situational-thematic groups constitutes a synonymous series of etiquette units that differ in semantic and stylistic features. The choice of etiquette units by communicants depends, first of all, on such determining extralinguistic factors as: social role, age, place of residence, gender, cultural and educational level of a sender of a message and a recipient, social distance between them, nature of communication, communication situation, specifics of relations between communicants. As a result of numerous repetitions, expressions become stable communication formulas, stereotypes, typical, repetitive constructions that are used in almost all communication situations.

In diplomatic discourse, when translating English-language etiquette formulas into Ukrainian, there is often a tendency to increase expressiveness and intensity compared to the original. This is largely influenced by the national and cultural characteristics of the Ukrainian language, which may require more elaborate or emphatic expressions to convey the same level of politeness or formality [8, p. 79].

We suggest developing a specialized methodology for translation that considers various options depending on the context of use (scientific, legal, journalistic), while incorporating both ethical considerations and the etiquette of diplomatic discourse [12, p. 285]. This methodology would include **reproductive tactics** through *transcoding methods* (such as transcription, transliteration, zero transcoding, practical transcription, and loan translation), alongside *translation transformations*: lexical-grammatical (including morphological substitution, transposition, total reorganization, and antonymic translation) and lexical-semantic (such as differentiation,

modulation, generalization, and concretization). The focus will be on accurately conveying content while ensuring that ethical standards, such as neutrality and objectivity, are upheld. Additionally, **adaptive tactics** of transformational translation, involving lexical-grammatical transformations like explication, elimination, and amplification, will allow translators to choose the most suitable options. This approach ensures the preservation of accuracy and clarity, while respecting both the original meaning and the diplomatic norms required in cross-cultural communication [2; 12].

Let's consider an example that illustrates how careful application of reproductive and adaptive tactics can preserve neutrality, clarity, and appropriateness in diplomatic discourse while ensuring that the message aligns with both cultural and ethical norms.

*1) International negotiations are a delicate process where 2) maintaining diplomatic neutrality is essential. It is important that each party involved upholds a 3) respectful tone throughout discussions, adhering to the 4) principles of fairness, impartiality, and non-interference. The language used must be carefully constructed to 5) prevent any misinterpretation or offence. Furthermore, during sensitive deliberations, 6) the need to prioritize mutual respect and to avoid controversial or 7) inflammatory rhetoric cannot be overstated. Such principles are integral to the successful conduct of diplomatic relations, as they foster cooperation, understanding, and the peaceful resolution of disputes* [13]. – 1) Міжнародні переговори є делікатним процесом, де 2) забезпечення дипломатичної нейтральності є надзвичайно важливим. Кожна сторона, що бере участь, повинна дотримуватися 3) шанобливого тону протягом обговорень, керуючись 4) принципами справедливості, неупередженості та невтручання. Мова, що використовується, повинна бути ретельно побудована, щоб 5) уникнути непорозумінь або образи. Крім того, під час чутливих дискусій 6) важливість пріоритетності взаємної поваги та уникнення контроверсійної чи 7) конструктивної риторики не можна перебільшити. Ці принципи є невід'ємною частиною успішного проведення дипломатичних відносин, оскільки вони сприяють співпраці, розумінню та мирному вирішенню суперечок.

The terminological phrases (1) *international negotiations* and (3) *respectful tone*, (4) *principles of fairness, impartiality, and non-interference* were rendered into Ukrainian using widely recognized terms through transcoding method by **loan translation** as (1) міжнародні переговори, (3) шанобливого тону



and (4) принципами справедливості, неупередженості та невторчання which aligns with the diplomatic context in both languages. Since the form and meaning correspond to one of the dictionary definitions of the original lexical unit ‘міжнародні переговори’, ‘шанобливий тон’, ‘справедливість, неупередженість та невторчання’ that is already widely used in Ukrainian, there is no need for further transformation and the terms are retained without any modifications.

Let's consider another terminological expressions (7) *inflammatory rhetoric* and (2) *maintaining diplomatic neutrality* which are translated into Ukrainian as (7) конструктивної риторики and (2) забезпечення дипломатичної нейтральності, to illustrate the application of transcoding methods by **practical transcription**, as the roots of the lexical units *rhetoric*, *diplomatic* and *neutrality* were transcoded, but the endings in Ukrainian translation ‘риторики’, ‘дипломатичної’ and ‘нейтральності’ were adjusted according to the norms of the target language. Meanwhile, the lexical unit *maintaining* was replaced using lexical-grammatical transformation of **morphological replacement** with ‘забезпечення’ to align with the grammatical structure in Ukrainian. In case of translation lexical unit *inflammatory* the lexical-grammatical transformation of **antonymic translation** is applied to shift from negative *inflammatory* to positive *framing* ‘конструктивної’ (constructive) in diplomatic discourse, making it more suitable for formal negotiations.

Incorporating an ethical framework into diplomatic discourse, the reproduction of the terminological unit (5) *prevent any misinterpretation or offence* as (5) уникнути непорозумінь або образи in Ukrainian demonstrates the careful application of the lexical-semantic transformation of **generalization**. This approach broadens the scope of the original phrase, shifting the focus from the specific terms *misinterpretation* and *offence* to a more inclusive concept of *misunderstandings*. By doing so, the translation not only captures the essence of the source text but also aligns with the ethical principles of diplomacy, emphasizing the importance of fostering mutual understanding and respect. This generalized phrasing ensures that the translation encompasses a wider range of potential diplomatic concerns, allowing for more flexibility in addressing unforeseen issues. Ultimately, this transformation reinforces the commitment to maintaining respectful and constructive communication, minimizing the risk of unintended missteps that could hinder diplomatic relations.

The next terminological expressions (6) *the need to prioritize mutual respect* in Ukrainian

translation (6) важливість пріоритетності взаємної поваги illustrates the implementation of several transformations, such as **total reorganization**, as the sentence structure undergoes a comprehensive reorganization to ensure a natural flow in Ukrainian while maintaining a clear emphasis on the ethical principle of mutual respect. The translation of lexical unit *the need* employs lexical-semantic transformations, including **modulation** and **concretization**, as the meaning of the source unit is logically developed in the target unit shifting from the general *need* to a more concrete action-oriented lexical unit ‘важливість’. While translating the lexical unit *to prioritize* into Ukrainian ‘пріоритетності’ the lexical-grammatical transformation of **morphological replacement** is applied, changing the part of speech from a verb to a noun in Ukrainian ‘пріоритетності’. This adjustment not only aligns with linguistic norms but also reinforces the ethical dimension by framing prioritization as an established value rather than a fleeting action. The other lexical unit *mutual respect* is rendered as ‘взаємної поваги’ through the transcoding method of **loan translation**. Here, the source language's terms are carefully matched with their lexical equivalents in the target language, preserving both the conceptual and ethical integrity of the original expression. These deliberate transformations ensure that the translation remains faithful to the original meaning while highlighting the ethical imperatives essential in diplomatic communication.

Thus, the translation analysis demonstrates that reproductive tactics realized by loan translation, lexical-semantic transformations of modulation, concretization and generalization and lexical-grammatical transformations of morphological replacement, total reorganization, antonymic translation is highly productive as it allows translators to adapt the text to language norms and cultural context, ensuring correct perception and preservation of content.

Adaptive tactics such as explication, elimination and amplification are commonly used in poetic translation, but they are less effective for translating ethical and etiquette-related concepts in diplomatic discourse. These tactics can be poorly suited to the culturally specific and ethically sensitive domain of diplomacy, where subtle distinctions are crucial and may be distorted if not carefully applied. The usage of these methods risks diluting the precision and moral authority of terms like neutrality, respect or impartiality, potentially misaligning the message with local diplomatic norms or expectations through the addition of unnecessary explanations or omission of key terms.

**Conclusions.** Diplomatic discourse plays a pivotal role in international relations, serving as a tool for states to manage political, economic and cultural interactions while safeguarding their interests. Translators are vital in preserving the intended tone, meaning, and purpose of diplomatic language, bridging linguistic and cultural divides through both linguistic skill and a deep understanding of diplomatic ethics and etiquette. As a highly structured form of communication, it consists of a sender, a message, and a recipient, where interpretation is shaped by textual and contextual elements, making perception and interpretation key to its effectiveness. Unlike personal communication, which is often subjective, diplomatic exchanges are focused on interstate objectives, influencing behaviour and decision-making, with formality and objectivity being central to ensure that the state's position is accurately conveyed.

The analysis of Ukrainian translations of diplomatic terminology highlights the application of reproductive translation techniques to ensure both

linguistic accuracy and alignment with the ethical principles of diplomatic discourse. Common methods, such as loan translation, were used for widely recognized terms, providing direct equivalents, while a combination of transcoding and lexical-grammatical transformations ensured grammatical coherence and upheld the ethical tone of diplomacy. More complex lexical expressions required nuanced transformations that blended transcoding with lexical-semantic and lexical-grammatical techniques, expanding their meaning to capture the ethical commitment to understanding and respect inherent in diplomatic interactions. This multi-layered approach guarantees that translations not only reflect the meaning of the original text but also preserve the principles of neutrality, respect, and constructive communication central to diplomatic dialogue. Further study of the ethical challenges that translators face, like balancing accuracy with adjusting to the cultural norms of the target audience, could help us better understand the moral responsibilities of translators in diplomacy.

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**Бойко Я.В. ЕТИКА ТА ЕТИКЕТ ДИПЛОМАТИЧНОГО ДИСКУРСУ  
ЯК ПРОБЛЕМА ПЕРЕКЛАДОЗНАВСТВА**

*У цій статті досліджено основні поняття етики (моральні принципи, що визначають правильне і неправильне) та етикету (соціально прийнятна поведінка та формальна комунікація) в дипломатичному дискурсі, підкреслюючи їх відмінні, але взаємопов'язані ролі у регулюванні людських взаємодій. У статті висвітлюється, як ці концепції перетинаються в дипломатії, де важливим є дотримання етичних стандартів, таких як чесність і нейтральність, у той час як етикет визначає відповідний тон, формальність і культурну чутливість, необхідні для успішної дипломатичної комунікації. Стаття також поглиблює розуміння специфіки дипломатичної мови, наголошуючи на таких характеристиках, як формальність, нейтральність, непрямая мова та використання титулів для підтримки порядку та сприяння мирним відносинам. Основну увагу в статті приділено ролі перекладу в дипломатичному дискурсі, зокрема при передачі між мовами з різними культурними та лінгвістичними нормами. Автор пропонує спеціалізовану методику, що враховує як етичні міркування, так і специфічний етикет дипломатичного дискурсу. Ця методика включає репродуктивні тактики, спрямовані на збереження нейтральності, точності та ясності в перекладах при дотриманні культурних та етичних норм, а також адаптивні тактики. Стаття також окреслює виклики, з якими стикаються перекладачі при перекладі виразів, пов'язаних з етикетом, між мовами, враховуючи, що українська мова, наприклад, часто вимагає більш детальних або емоційних виразів порівняно з англійською. Підкреслюється важливість збалансування точності та культурної чутливості, щоб уникнути непорозуміння і забезпечити відповідність перекладу дипломатичним стандартам. Стаття описує за методику перекладу, яка адаптується до контексту і забезпечує етичну та культурно відповідну комунікацію, підкреслюючи, що тонкість дипломатичної мови вимагає уважного підходу для збереження її змісту та тону.*

**Ключові слова:** етичні концепти, етикетні мовні формули, дипломатична мова, репродуктивні та адаптивні тактики у відтворенні дипломатичного дискурсу.